

# Connect 360: Paul's Prayers

August 27, 2019

- *Lesson 2 in the Baptist Way Press Connect 360 unit "The Fullness of Christ" focuses on Colossians 1:9-14.*

Many people live empty lives, searching for meaning and purpose. In his prayer for the Colossians, the Apostle Paul provided a solution that is as effective today as it was then (Colossians 1:9-14). In these verses, Paul introduced four foundational themes Christians should apply to their lives: know God's will, live virtuous lives, receive empowerment, and overcome the dominion of darkness.

We can live worthy, fulfilling lives of meaning and purpose. In fact, as followers of Jesus, we are expected to live eternity-changing lives. This calling is not just for those who serve in full-time ministry-related vocations. The calling to impact the world for Christ is for all people—from both genders and all languages, races, ages, backgrounds and walks of life. A worthy life may be that of a woman who seeks to live out Proverbs 31, or an individual who wants his or her character to be defined by the qualities of Philippians 4:8: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

The Apostle Paul prayed that the Colossians would know God's will (1:9). We all should know God's general will: act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before the Lord (Micah 6:8), love him and our neighbors (Matthew 22:36-40), and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). These are the foundational tenets of the Christian faith. Knowing God's general will teaches us to discern God's specific will, that utilizes our gifts and talents to love and care for others in detailed ways.

# Growing in Christ

Growing in the knowledge of God means more than learning details about him; it means that we develop a deeper relationship as we bond with God. As we grow in Christ and are strengthened by him, we develop endurance and patience. Endurance is the ability to stand with confidence through all the storms of life. If the same agitations set us off now, as would happen when we are younger, then perhaps we have not grown as much as we would like.

With maturity comes additional responsibilities. True discipleship does not duck responsibility, and it is not powerless against the dominion of darkness: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm” (Ephesians 6:12- 14a; see also 1 Peter 5:8-9).

*Compiled by Stan Granberry, marketing coordinator for BaptistWay Press.*

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